

Bullying BEHAVIORS

Thousands of children experience bullying every day. Because parents rarely see it happening, you may not realize how extreme it can get and how deeply it can affect your child. Bullying takes multiple forms.

- > **Physical** – hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings, etc.
- > **Verbal** – taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, making threats, posting negative things on the internet, etc.
- > **Psychological** – spreading rumors, manipulating relationships, extortion, intimidation, etc.
- > **Sexual** – unwanted physical contact, abusive comments about physical development, etc.

Bullying generally starts in elementary school and peaks in sixth through eighth grade. It can also persist into high school and adult life. Much bullying goes unreported, but we know that bullying occurs at about the same rate regardless of class size or school size. One of the worst aspects of bullying is its relentlessness. Bullies tend to target the same children repeatedly throughout the day.

Who is a Bully?

Although the stereotypical bully is male, girls bully almost as often as boys. Boy bullies tend to resort to one-on-one violence or threats of violence. Girl bullies most often bully as a group by socially excluding the victim or spreading rumors about them. Bullies are generally considered popular, they have a few friends, and other children seem to admire them for their toughness. Bullies often have relatively high levels of self-esteem.

How Does Bullying Affect Others?

Children who are bullied may develop low self-esteem. Being bullied increases stress levels and anxiety levels that can affect your child's ability to focus and concentrate on schoolwork.

Bullying affects the environment of school by creating a climate of fear among students, disturbing their ability to learn, and leading to other anti-social behaviors. Children who experience bullying are more at risk for mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. Bullies are also at risk for developing the use of increasingly violent behaviors as an adult.

Helping Your Child Deal with Bullying

Talk to your child about bullying. Help them define what bullying is and let them know you are there to help them in whatever way possible. Encourage your child to report all bullying incidents no matter how scared they are of the bully. Treat the school as your ally. Share your concerns and specific information about bullying with the school.

Preventing Your Child from Becoming a Bully

Observe your child and praise them when they act appropriately. Positive reinforcement is the best form of discipline. If you hear your child call others names or exclude others from participation, correct their behavior. Children need to clearly hear the message that they are not allowed to treat others cruelly.

If you learn your child is bullying others, stay calm. Ask your child about their behavior and immediately set limits for their actions. If your child sees aggressive behaviors from you, your spouse, or older siblings, try to put a stop to these behaviors and help your family find healthier ways to handle their emotions.